

WEST



**Centers of Thought
on the Westside**

Help for Troubled Teens

**Richard Diebenkorn
on Santa Cruz Island**



Richard Diebenkorn and his wife, Phyllis, were intimate friends of Carey Stanton's from their college days at Stanford University. The artist created some three dozen works over the years during his sojourns on Santa Cruz Island. Little known, less seen, this rare body of work is now housed at the Santa Barbara Museum of Fine Art. The above watercolor of Prisoners' Harbor, made in 1958, displays the extraordinary hand of the master and glows with his now unmistakable color. Prisoners' Harbor, named so in 1830 when a load of convicts from Acapulco were released and abandoned on the Island, is the anchorage that has remained the main entry point for Santa Cruz, from which supplies were stored for shipment to and from the mainland. Today it is run by the United States Navy. Bill Dewey's photograph at left, taken from a hillside overlooking the harbor, is just about where the artist stood to frame his landscape.



FOR THE LOVE OF AN ISLAND

by Julia Braun Kessler

Santa Cruz Island has remained
virtually unspoiled,
thanks to the devotion of
one man—Carey Stanton.

Its spectacular beauty
has been captured in the paintings of
Stanton's lifelong friend,
renowned artist
Richard Diebenkorn.

Story begins on next page



Visualize a mountainous haven just off the Santa Barbara coast, a California island that's four times the size of Manhattan. Imagine that such a realm is inhabited by one—and only one—registered voter. Until recently, Santa Cruz Island, a mere 22 miles from the mainland, was just such a place. Until the death of Dr. Carey Stanton in December of 1987, the better part of the island's 62,000 acres remained the personal demesne of this very private man.

The largest of the eight islands in the Channel group, Santa Cruz—"Island of the Holy Cross"—looms majestically when approached from the air by the STOL twin-engine Islander plane. The island is a veritable paradise of unspoiled nature, its green hills and deep canyons contrasting starkly with the brilliant blue sea and the white breakers along empty stretches of beach. As soon as the plane puts down on the tiny, unpaved landing strip, the songs of birds can be heard pervading the sparkling air, and gulls, pelicans and cormorants squawk overhead.

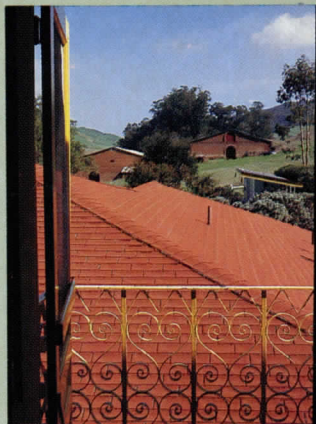
Discovered back in the sixteenth century by voyaging Spanish explorers, this 96-square-mile island has remained mostly in the hands of a couple of privileged families ever

continued next page



Diebenkorn's view of the rancho, as seen from about 100 paces, and as it looks from the same vantage today. The artist made several versions of Stanton's hacienda, both in oil and watercolor. Always a stickler for detail, Stanton filled his house with island antiques, as well as fine furniture, paintings, and a library reflecting his unique literary tastes.

since. When Cabrillo sailed by it in 1542, what he saw was an island peopled by some thousand or more Chumash Indians, a tribe that had been there for centuries. But it wasn't until 1769, more than two centuries later, that the seagoing portion of the Portola expedition (led by Juan Pérez) actually stopped to visit the territory. The story is told that this incident resulted in the naming of the island. It seems that Fra Vizcaino, a priest who accompanied the sailors to what is now Prisoners' Harbor, had always carried with him a wooden walking staff with an iron cross on top. Back on board ship, he realized he'd left the staff behind on the island. The Spaniards despaired of ever seeing it again. Iron from Spain was much coveted in those times, a trading treasure for the Chumash. Yet before long the crew detected the Indians in their *tomols*, paddling



Diebenkorn painted this watercolor of the Stanton Winery through a second-story screen door. The decorative metalwork is traced in the delicate black lines at the center, while the work is framed by the door itself, with a bordering characteristic of the artist's later abstractions.



toward the ship frantically, holding the staff aloft. The delighted priest is said to have immediately blessed the Indians and their land, in turn securing the island as a Christian outpost to be known as "the island of the holy cross."

That event, however, unfortunately signaled the beginning of the end for the Chumash settlements on Santa Cruz. In the early years of the nineteenth century, as these Indians were regularly baptized into the Catholic Church, they were also removed to the mainland to be resettled in the charge of nearby missions along the coast.

Properly speaking, it can be said that the contemporary history of Santa Cruz began in 1880, when a Frenchman named Justinian Caire and his Italian wife, Albina, took control of the stock in the Santa Cruz Island Company. The ambitious Caire embarked upon an ingenious master plan for developing his acquisition—indeed, his empire. Paying their passage, he brought over scores of Italian artisans and craftsmen from Genoa: stonemasons, carpenters, and wrought-iron workers to build his chapel, his house and his winery, along with laborers, farmers and domestics to run his ranch. He brought sheep and cattle from the mainland, grew his own food and planted vineyards to produce choice Zinfandels, Chablis and Pinot Noirs. In addition, he built new ranches and outposts in eight areas over the breadth of the island, from Prisoners' Harbor and Forney's Cove to Portezuela, in the central valley. Caire was so successful in becoming self-sufficient that by the time he died in 1897, the island was said to need to import only coffee and sugar from the mainland.

However, confusion reigned following Caire's death, along with extensive litigation wars among his many heirs. When successful Los Angeles oilman and axle manufacturer Edwin Stanton (Carey Stanton's father) purchased the greatest part of Santa Cruz in 1937 for about \$1 million, the property had already been on the market for years and had fallen into serious disrepair. Caire's superb vineyards had been destroyed by the Prohibition laws of the 1920s, his ranch stock had been de-

continued next page



pleted, the remaining animals were running wild and the houses had become dilapidated.

But Stanton's purchase was to become a major commitment for him. He became a passionate islander, embarking upon an effort to revive and improve the property. Among his immediate ventures was the import of domestic stock to breed with the now feral population of sheep. Failing in this enterprise, he brought new cattle to the ranch. Cattle raising remained the mainstay of the island's economy in the coming years.

Still, it wasn't until Carey Stanton made the island his permanent residence and took over the management of the property during his parents' waning years that the notion of a true custodianship and "an historic burden of responsibility for the island" became a dedication and a reality. The younger Stanton approached his task with missionary-like zeal, and he never relented in his commitment.

In his will, Stanton designated the Santa Cruz Island Foundation and The Nature Conservancy as the parties responsible for maintaining the island's natural and cultural

wonders in perpetuity. Marla Daily, director of the foundation, says, "Carey Stanton cared about this island more than any human being imaginable. Eccentric he was, even a practicing Victorian, guarding his rights as a citizen, his privacy as a man. But his role in preserving [the island] in its pristine state, in relocating and rescuing its possessions and in documenting its history can never be overestimated."

Stanton, a born Angeleno, was raised in the early thirties in the then-fashionable Hancock Park area and was enrolled at the Third Street Elementary School. He later attended Stanford University, where he met Richard Diebenkorn, who was to become an internationally renowned artist and a life-long friend of Stanton's. (Diebenkorn's magnificent watercolors of the island grace these pages.) Stanton went on to Stanford's medical school and subsequently practiced medicine in New York for some ten years. But he seemed to have little heart for the work, wanting only to return to Santa Cruz Island and become its steward.

Some, both friend and foe among them, have characterized Stanton's perception of his role on Santa Cruz as overzealous. He believed that the island must be preserved as

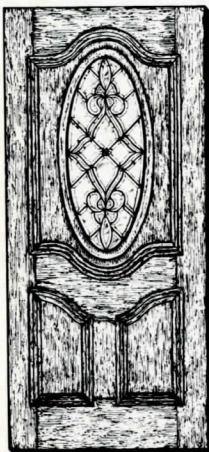
it stood and that it must therefore be protected from intrusion, from destruction, from invasion by people from the mainland. He loved, for example, to recall his categorical refusal of Jacques Cousteau's request to bring a television crew to the island. Such films reached the populace, Stanton said, and would cause an influx of sightseers.

Like his father before him, Stanton hunted down those who docked illegally or left their refuse on the shore. Anecdotes about such incidents are legendary. One describes Stanton's fury when he found an open plastic bag filled with banana peels, coffee grounds and other leavings on the northern shore. In his rage, he searched through every scrap in the fetid collection until he discovered its source on an envelope addressed to a Ventura yacht broker. He promptly made his way to the mainland office of the affluent Venturan and deposited the trash smack in the middle of the offender's desk. "I believe you left this behind on my island," he said, then turned on his heel and stalked out.

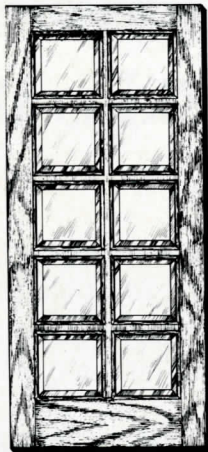
Complex personality though he was, Stanton wasn't fired merely by his own demand for privacy. He was determined that Santa Cruz Island be conserved in *every*

continued next page

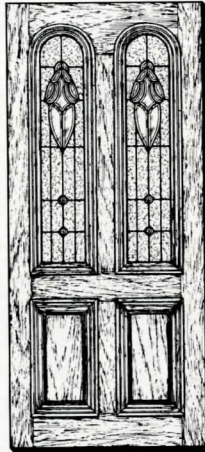
Custom Quality Doors at Production Line Prices



\$595



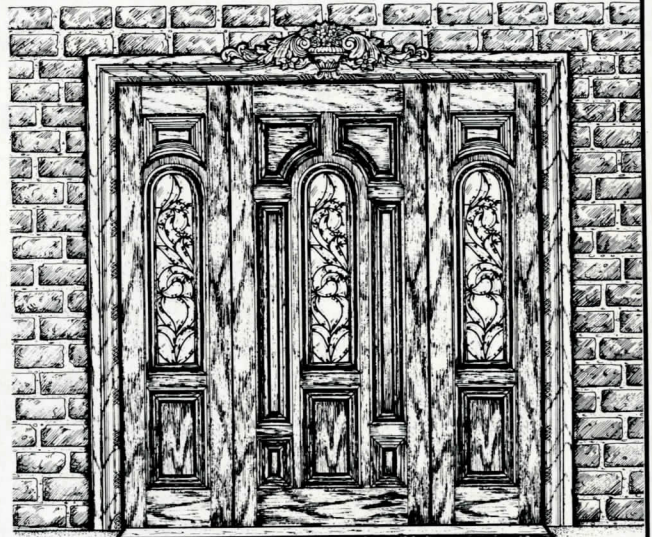
\$195



\$595

The Renaissance Contract Collection

Outstandingly handsome doors, beveled glass and sidelights at unbelievably low price points. Every one of these doors is solid mahogany, the premium door wood, with deep profiled mouldings and true raised panel construction. The glass is hand beveled clear and glue-chip for privacy and beauty, polished to a flawless finish and leaded in zinc. An excellent opportunity for builders and homeowners. Call us today for trade information.



The Premium Door Collection

Exceptional design and craftsmanship in solid Honduran Mahogany and American Oak. The finest beveled glass in the industry, leaded in zinc for strength and security. Distinctive styling and a full complement of matching sidelights, windows, carved and profiled casings and millwork. A truly unique combination of high quality and remarkably low prices.

RENAISSANCE

The Final Word in Doors & Beveled Glass

1656 Mission Drive, Solvang California 93463 • (805) 688-6222 • Open Every Day 10-6



Coches Prietos S.C.F.



The Diebenkorns would go there to picnic at Coches Prietos, a good distance from the Stanton house over rough terrain by jeep. Its huge, dramatic rock, splendid sky and broad beach can be seen in the artist's rendition, as well as in Dewey's photograph.

Perfection . . .



Salle à manger Campagnarde



Chambre à coucher Louis Philippe



Country French and Antique Reproductions made of solid hardwoods handcarved and crafted in France as they were in the 18th century.

particular, that it be a specimen of California's earliest history, of a now altogether bygone time. Explains Daily: "He was a scholar in the purest sense. His cast of mind was that of the most meticulous. He knew the origin of every species, the development of each plant and the evolution of island animals. Whether he lectured on the endemic Santa Cruz Island jays or on the anemones and red chitons in the Coches Prietos tide-pools or speculated on the origins of the island's stock of wild boar, he was altogether learned, totally informed.

"Just look about his house and winery. He would insist that every stick of furniture be labeled, every implement belonging to Santa Cruz be sought out and brought back to where it had originated. If you study his possessions today, you will find each object documented in his own hand, always in the most thoroughly researched detail imaginable."

Lyndal Laughrin has served for many years as manager of the Santa Cruz Island Reserve System, operated by the University of California at Santa Barbara and, with Stanton's blessing, serving nearly 2,000 visiting students annually. Laughlin describes

Stanton thus: "When I first came to Santa Cruz, it seemed that what Dr. Stanton wanted most was to be shielded from the many students [brought] over each week to study. But I soon discovered the fund of knowledge he possessed about every aspect of the island. It made me admire and respect him."

The slight, bristly Stanton was consistently reputed by friends and associates alike to have been a gentleman as well as a scholar. His constant friends Richard and Phyllis Diebenkorn, whose frequent visits to Santa Cruz over the years are clearly in evidence at the ranch, speak fondly of their amity over a lifetime. "He was the most caring, devoted man. . . . You always knew that he would be there on the spot if you should need him," says the artist. "I can remember that whenever we needed to leave town, he'd immediately offer to call and look after my mother. We both adored him."

Besides creating sketches, watercolors, and paintings of the island's locales, Diebenkorn designed the flag of Santa Cruz. And near the pool at the ranch is a pair of mock portholes backed by the artist's famous blue tones. In one are the words "This is not a real porthole—look in the

other"; in the second, "Do you have to look in this porthole?"—a reflection of the amusements of the two friends.

Above all, Stanton—this single, and singular, citizen of Santa Cruz—did manage to secure the preservation of his treasured island. Now, with his generous legacy to the Santa Cruz Island Foundation in conservation partnership with The Nature Conservancy, the island's future seems assured.

A limited number of naturalist-led day trips to Pelican Bay are scheduled each year. Interested laymen, naturalists, researchers, and educators should address their inquiries to The Nature Conservancy at 213 Stearns Wharf, Santa Barbara, California 93101.

Julia Braun Kessler is arts editor of L.A. WEST. Her work also appears in *Family Circle*, *Travel & Leisure* and other magazines.

... With a French Heart



Bureau Empire



Armoire Provencale

Save
20%-30%
On Our
New
Neo-Classic
Collection

Special
Introductory
Sale

I·C·H·E·L·I·E·U C·O·L·L·E·C·T·I·O·N

1. La Brea Avenue (between Beverly & Melrose), Los Angeles, CA 90036 • (213) 931-1855 • Open Tuesday — Saturday 10 to 6